



## **Restoration of Fire-Adapted Ecosystems BLM Medford District, Oregon**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Medford District, located in Oregon, faced many restoration challenges after four large wildfires in 2002. Eight designated communities-at-risk, and large portions of a two-county area were affected by the fires. The Medford District developed four Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Plans to treat 24,063 acres in priority burned areas to protect life, property and natural resources from additional damage after the fires. The Medford District completed post-fire rehabilitation work to improve lands that were unlikely to recover naturally from the effects of the wildfires.

In 2002, the Biscuit Fire, Timbered Rock Fire, Squires Peak Fire, and the East Antelope Fire affected 24,063 acres of BLM lands. Many of these acres were within special preservation areas, wildland-urban interface areas, or in municipal watersheds. Since rehabilitation and restoration is a goal of the National Fire Plan (NFP) the Medford District formed three interdisciplinary ESR teams consisting of a variety of natural resource specialists to begin planning.

The Medford District was successful in implementing the ESR Plans and in preventing further damage to both BLM and private lands. Winter flooding and soil erosion had the potential to damage homes, roads and bridges, pollute domestic water sources, and further degrade valuable forest lands. The Medford District worked hard to avoid such instances through reforestation, road rehabilitation and eradication of invasive species.

The Medford District knew it was critical for the ESR Planning process to be successful since public interest in the recovery process was very high and with President Bush bringing national attention to the area when he toured the Squires Fire. Public outreach was essential to the planning process and provided the District the opportunity to educate the public on fuels reduction and restoration work. The Medford District held numerous outreach events, gave presentations, led informal group discussions, and held neighborhood meetings and field tours.

The Medford District collaborated with the Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Oregon Departments of Forestry and Fish & Wildlife, and local watershed councils. These agencies provided input into the ESR Plans. The Medford District coordinated treatment activities with the Forest Service to increase efficiency, to contract for aerial seeding, produce tree seedlings, developing a native seed collection, and in sharing the use and cost of helicopters and equipment.

Since most of the fires occurred in the wildland-urban interface, emergency stabilization of soil and stream channels to prevent flooding and to minimize impacts to municipal watersheds and cultural and natural resources was critical. The first year of stabilization efforts included seeding 1,946 acres, installing 35 check dams, returning woody debris to 3.5 miles of stream channels, and removing hazard trees along 25 miles of roads for public safety. The Medford District also treated noxious weeds, conducted surveys, renovated or decommissioned roads, replaced water dips and culverts, and planted over 4.3 million conifer seedlings.

The Medford District incorporated research into each ESR activity and included a “Lessons Learned” section in all close-out reports. The Medford District continues to gather information through monitoring to improve future suppression and restoration efforts.